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A Hebrew Primer

Elementary and Introductory

BY
WALLACE N. STEARNS



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A HEBREW PRIMER

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A critical knowledge of the languages in which the Bible is written may involve time and labor, but some acquaintance is within the reach of all. It is impossible to overestimate the ability to read the critical commentaries, and with the aid of grammar and dictionary to test theories and suggestions as they arise. Otherwise, students are the victims of exegesis. Even the best translations fall short of the originals. Doubtless the English Bible contains more than enough for one's salvation, but far too often English speech breaks down in the effort to convey the delicate shades of meaning that so abound in the original tongues in which the books of the Old and New Testaments were written.

Admington
If the Testaments are to lie open on the desk and if counsel and inspiration are to be sought from their pages, then ought the preacher and the teacher to seek every means and every help for using them aright.

The following outline and tables are an attempt, not at a scientific statement, but to show the bare essentials in such form as to be readily understood and used by the learner. It is not proposed

to do away with the use of paradigms: the ear is ever a valuable aid to the eye. Much less is it proposed to escape from the grammar: the purpose is, rather, to summarize and to render more intelligible the beginnings of grammar. This outline should accompany, not supplant, the grammar.

SOME USEFUL SMALL BOOKS

Breslau, M. H. Compendious Hebrew Grammar. London, 1895. 35 cents.

Davidson, A. B. An Introductory Hebrew Grammar. 18th Ed. Edinburgh, 1907. \$1.80.

Koenig, Eduard. Hebraische Grammatik. Leipzig, 1908. 85 cents.

Lucas and Abrahams. Hebrew Lesson Book. London, 1903. 75 cents.

Mitchell, H. G. Hebrew Lessons. Boston, 1905. \$1.80.

Hebrew-English Lexicon (small). Bagster, London, 1907. 90 cents.

FOR PRACTICE READING

Hebrew Bible, Hebrew and English in parallel columns. Berlin, 1903 (Br. and For. Bible Soc.). \$2.00.

Tischendorf, Baer, Delitzsch: Liber Psalmorum Hebraecus atque Latinus (Jerome). Leipzig, 1874. \$2.00.

I. The Hebrew alphabet consists of twenty-two characters:—

SIGNS	NAMES	SIGNS	NAMES
א	'ălěph	מ, ם	mēm
ב	bēth	נ, ן	nûn
ג	gíměl	ס	sāměkh
ד	dālěth	ע	'ăyîn
ה	hē	פ, ף	pē
ו	wāw	צ, ץ	ṣādhé
ז	zăyîn	ק	kôph
ח	hēth	ר	rêsh
ט	tēth	שׁ	shîn
י	yôdh	שׂ	sin
כ, ך	kăph	ת	tāw
ל	lāmědh		

2. The characters א, ב, ג, ד, ה, ו are the final forms of their respective alternates.

3. The sound of each of the characters is indicated by the initial letter of its name. The dot under one of these letters indicates a slightly modified sound of that letter. See further below, III.

4. These letters are all consonants.

5. Hebrew is written from right to left.

V. The sh^ewa. 1. There are as many syllables in a Hebrew word as there are vowels. The vowels (except one use of short a, called *pathach furtive*) are sounded with preceding consonants.

2. Syllables may end or begin in one or even two consonants. In case a word begins with two consonants, the pronunciation is helped by a *very* short e sound, called a sh^ewa, written under the first consonant.

3. In case the initial consonant is not a guttural, the sh^ewa is written ְ . If the initial consonant be a guttural, the sh^ewa is combined with one of the short vowels, as ֶ , = very short a; ֵ , = very short e; ֹ , = very short o.

EXERCISES

Name and give values of all letters and diacritical marks. Note syllables.

זֶה תְּפִילָּה : זֶה סֵפֶר : זֶה עֵץ : שְׁלוֹם אֲדוֹנֵי : קוֹמוּ :
 לֵב : לֵבָב : כֶּ : אָמַר : אֲנִי קָמְתִי : מִי אֶתָּה :
 מִמָּדָר : לָךְ : לוֹ : מִי נָתַן : לִי סֵפֶר : לִבִּי :

I. Hebrew nouns and verbs are built up on certain primitive forms called roots. These roots regularly contain three consonantal letters.

II. There are two genders, masculine and feminine. The mas. sing. shows the same consonants

as the stem: the fem. sing. adds the ending הַתְּ. The mas. plu. adds the ending יִם; the fem. plu. ends in תִּ

III. There is also a dual, generally used of objects occurring in pairs. The mas. dual ends in יִם to the mas. sing.; the fem. dual adds יִם to the original form of the fem. sing.

IV. Nouns when used in relation to other nouns—for example, possession—assume a shortened form called the construct state. In mas. dual and plu. יִם and יִם lose ם and become יִי. Fem. sing. הַתְּ becomes תְּ (original form). Otherwise no changes occur.

The above rules hold for all nouns, both substantive and adjective, except when the adjective is used predicatively, that is, asserted of the subject.

EXERCISES

Analyze the following forms:

סֵפֶר : טוֹבָה : טוֹבִי : טוֹבִים : טֹב : זֹאת :
 זֶה דֶּרֶךְ : עֲתִדָּם : עֲתִדָּה : עֲתִי : סִפְרִים :
 אֲנִי רִבְקָה : מִי־הָאִישׁ : דִּרְכִּי : דִּרְכֵּי :

V. In case the noun is limited by a personal pronoun, the said pronoun is indicated by an abbreviated form appended as a suffix to the noun. We show below the several pronouns and the suffixes representing them:

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

<i>Sing.</i>		<i>Plur.</i>	
1 C.	אֲנִי or אֲנִי I;	1 C.	אֲנֵינוּ or אֲנֵינוּ we;
2 M.	אַתָּה	2 M.	אַתֶּם
2 F.	אַתְּ (אַתְּ)	2 F.	אַתֶּנָּה (אַתֶּן)
3 M.	הוא he;	3 M.	הֵם or הֵמָּה
3 F.	היא she.	3 F.	הֵנָּה or הֵנָּה

PRONOMINAL SUFFIXES

WITH SINGULAR NOUNS

<i>Sing.</i>	
1 C.	ִי my.
2 M.	ְךָ
2 F.	ְךָ
3 M.	ִיו his.
3 F.	ִיהָ her.
<i>Plur.</i>	
1 C.	ֵנוּ our.
2 M.	ֵכֶם
2 F.	ֵכֶן
3 M.	ֵהֶם
3 F.	ֵהֶן

WITH PLURAL NOUNS

<i>Sing.</i>	
1 C.	ִי my.
2 M.	ֵיךָ
2 F.	ֵיךָ
3 M.	ֵיהֶם
3 F.	ֵיהֶן
<i>Plur.</i>	
1 C.	ֵינוּ our.
2 M.	ֵיכֶם
2 F.	ֵיכֶן
3 M.	ֵיהֶם
3 F.	ֵיהֶן

VI. A noun may or may not have one or more changeable vowels. Accordingly, five classes of nouns may be distinguished:

1. The first class nouns in which no changes occur. E. g.—

	<i>Sing.</i>	<i>Plur.</i>
Abs.	סוּם	סוּמִים
Constr.	סוּם	סוּמֵי

Suffixes are simply appended (regularly).

Dual and plural forms are alike.

2. Mas. and fem. nouns whose first vowel is shortened by added suffix are put in the second class. E. g.—

	<i>Sing.</i>	<i>Plur.</i>
Abs.	צָמִיד	צָמִידִים
Constr.	צָמִיד	צָמִידֵי

With light suffixes, as in צָמִידֵי.

With heavy suffixes, as in צָמִידֵיכֶם, צָמִידֵיכֶם.

3. Nouns of the third class have a mutable vowel in the ultima. Three groups are distinguished, as represented in the following paradigms:

Singular

	1	2	3
Abs.	מִצֵּב	כְּתֵב	סוֹסָה
Const.	מִצֵּב	כְּתֵב	סוֹסֶת
Light Suffix	מִצְבִּי	כְּתִבִּי	סוֹסָתִי
Heavy Suffix	מִצְבֵּיכֶם	כְּתִבֵּיכֶם	סוֹסֵיכֶם

Plural

Abs.	מִצְבִּים	כְּתִבִּים	סוֹסוֹת
Const.	מִצְבֵּי	כְּתִבֵּי	סוֹסוֹת
L. S.	מִצְבֵּי	כְּתִבֵּי	סוֹסוֹתִי
H. S.	מִצְבֵּיכֶם	כְּתִבֵּיכֶם	סוֹסוֹתֵיכֶם

(1) In No. 2 whenever two vocal sh^{wa}s occur, as with מִצֵּב, כְּתֵב, סוֹסָה, the first sh^{wa} gives place to a short vowel, ׁ or ׂ.

(2) In No. 3 final ׁ becomes original ׂ.

4. The fourth class includes mas. and fem. nouns with two changeable vowels, as in:

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
	1. (Mas.)	2. (Fem.)	
Abs.	לֵב	לֵבָה	Abs. 1 לֵבִים 2 נְדָבוֹת
Const.	לֵב	לֵבָת	Const. 1 לֵבִי 2 נְדָבוֹת
L. S.	לֵבִי	לֵבָתִי	L. S. 1 לֵבִי 2 נְדָבוֹתִי
H. S.	לֵבְכֶם	לֵבָתְכֶם	H. S. 1 לֵבֵיכֶם 2 נְדָבוֹתֵיכֶם

5. Class five includes the so-called segholate nouns, as in:

<i>Singular</i>			
	1. (Mas.)	2. (Fem.)	3. (Fem.)
Abs.	מֶלֶךְ	מַלְכָּה	מוֹלְדֹת
Const.	מֶלֶךְ	מַלְכַּת	מוֹלְדֹת
L. S.	מֶלְכִי	מַלְכָּתִי	מוֹלְדֹתִי
H. S.	מֶלְכֶם	מַלְכַּתְכֶם	מוֹלְדֹתְכֶם

<i>Plural</i>			
Abs.	מְלָכִים	מְלָכוֹת	מוֹלְדוֹת
Const.	מְלָכִי	מְלָכוֹת	מוֹלְדוֹת
L. S.	מְלָכִי	מְלָכוֹתִי	מוֹלְדוֹתִי
H. S.	מְלָכֵיכֶם	מְלָכוֹתֵיכֶם	מוֹלְדוֹתֵיכֶם

EXERCISES

Translate the following forms:

אֲנֹכִי : אַתָּה : הֵם : הִיא : הֵן : אַתָּן : הוּא : אַתָּ :
 סוּס (give plu.) : צִמִּיד (give plu. and plu. constr.) :
 סֵפֶר (= book), my book, their book, his book, her
 book, their (mas. and fem.) book, your (mas. and
 fem.) book : כֹּתֵב (= writer).

VII. It is well here to learn the definite article as this often occurs with nouns. The definite article assumes the form of a prefix הַ. Its form occurs as follows:

Before ordinary consonants הַ (+ daghesh forte in bosom of following letter).

Before gutturals	{	הַ	ח	הַ
		הַ	ע, ר, ש	הַ
		הַ	ע (accented)	הַ
		הַ	ע (unac.)	הַ, הַ, הַ

EXERCISES

Prefix the article before the following words:

רֶחֶם : שֵׁמֶשׁ : פָּדוּל : הוּא : הִיא : הַשֶּׁקֶד : הַדָּבָר :
 חֶלִי : חֶג : הַר : גִּבִּי : עָרֵב : רֹאֵה : אֲנִי :

I. In the analysis of the Hebrew verb six points are to be considered: the form of the action (expressed in the stem), mood, tense, person, number, and object (a pronominal remnant).

1. $\text{יִקְטֹל} + \text{הוּא} + \text{קָטַל} + \text{וְ}$.

1. Simple (1), imperf. (2), 3d sing. (no ending), mas. (2), mas. 3d sing. suffix (4).

2. $\text{כָּתַב} + \text{נִי} + \text{הֵם} + \text{יִקְטֹל} + \text{וְ}$.

2. Simple perf. (1), 1st plur. (3), mas. 3d plur. suffix (4).

II. The five verb stems (two exceptions Qal, קָטַל , and Pi'el, קָטַל , doubled middle consonant —ט—) are indicated by a prefix:

1. Simple active (Qal)—simple form of the verb, קָטַל .

2. Simple passive (Niphal), originally a reflexive, נִקְטַל (—נ—).

3. Causative active (Hiphil), הִקְטִיל (—ה—).

Causative passive (Hophal), הִקְטַל (—ה—).

4. Intensive active (Pi'el), קָטַל , doubled middle consonant (—ט—).

Intensive passive (Pu'al), קָטַל , doubled middle consonant (—ט—).

5. Reflexive, e. g. acting for or on one self, הִתְקַטַּל (—הת—).

III. There are four moods expressed by inflectional forms—indicative, imperative, participle, infinitive. E. g., in the first stem קָטַל, קָטֵל, קָטֹל, קָטֹל (קָטֹל). Other shades of meaning, as contingency, permission, volition, etc., are generally expressed by the indicative (generally imperfect), with adverbial forms.

NOTE 1.—The imperative is not used with negatives: the Imperf. Ind. (Jussive) is used instead.

NOTE 2.—Of the infinitive there are two forms: (1) the absolute (as קָטֹל), generally expressing intensity when preceding a finite verb (as קָטֹל תִּקְטֹל) or continuance (occasionally intensity) when it follows the finite verb (as תִּקְטֹל קָטֹל); (2) the construct, which answers to the uses of the English infinitive. It may take suffixes and prepositional prefixes.

IV. In Hebrew, action is viewed not strictly as past or future, but as complete (perfect) or incomplete (imperfect). Reference is, rather, to state than to time of action. In the imperfect this feature is expressed by a preformative, a remnant of the personal pronoun, which has also a personal significance.

IMPERFECT

Sing. 3 M. —י	Plur. 3 M. —י
3 F. —ת	3 F. —ת
2 M. —ת	2 M. —ת
2 F. —ת	2 F. —ת
(M OR F) 1 C. —א	1 C. —נ

NOTE 1.—The derivation of these forms will appear from a comparison of the above table with the paradigm of the personal pronoun.

Sing. 3 M. יהא	Plur. 3 M. יהם
3 F. יהא	3 F. יהו
2 M. אתה (ת)	2 M. אתם (ת)
2 F. את (ת)	2 F. אתן (ת)
1 C. { אני (א) אנכי	1 C. { יְהִנֵּנִי (נ) יְהִנֵּנִי }

NOTE 2.—In the Hiphil, — in the first syllable represents the original vowel, weakened in the perf. to —.

V. The person of the actor is further indicated by suffixes (also remnants of the personal pronoun). In Hebrew the pronoun is added to, and not, as in English, written before the verb. E. g., Eng. I write; Heb. write-I, כִּתְּבֵנִי, where תִּי— (for כִּי—) is for אֲנִי. There are thus two sets (or double

sets) of endings, one for the perfect (tense) and one for the imperfect (tense).

INDICATIVE

<i>Perfect</i>	<i>Imperfect</i>
Sing. 3 M. —	Sing. 3 M. —
3 F. הָֿ	3 F. —
2 M. הָֿ	2 M. —
2 F. הָֿ	2 F. הָֿ
1 C. הָֿ	1 C. —
Plur. 3 M. הָֿ	Plur. 3 M. הָֿ
3 F. הָֿ	3 F. הָֿ
2 M. הָֿ	2 M. הָֿ
2 F. הָֿ	2 F. הָֿ
1 C. הָֿ	1 C. —

IMPERATIVE

Sing. 2 M. —	Plur. הָֿ
2 F. הָֿ	הָֿ

NOTE 1.—The personal endings of the imperative are the same as those of corresponding forms of the imperfect. In the 2d and 3rd stems occurs

the preformative (the 2d stem may have ך in the absolute infinitive). E. g., הִקְטַל, הִקְטֹל.

VI. The pronominal object, like the personal sign, is affixed to the stem, following the personal ending if there be such.

Eng. I wrote it. Heb. wrote-I-it, כָּתַבְתִּי.

Thus all the several personal pronouns (i. e., the suffixes derived therefrom) would be added to the verb to express the several persons (§ 5). To these combinations (stem + personal ending) the pronouns, each and severally, will be affixed (stem + personal ending + personal suffix) to express personal object, as above. E. g., קָטַל (stem); קָטַלְתִּי, I killed; קָטַלְתִּי, I killed it.

NOTE 1.—The following table shows the several verbal suffixes expressing the object:

SINGULAR		
	After a consonant	After a vowel.
	<i>Perf.</i>	<i>Imperf. and Imper. Perf., Imperf., Imper.</i>
3 M.	יָ, הָ, וָ, תָ	3 M. הָ, וָ, תָ
3 F.	יָ, הָ, וָ, תָ	3 F. הָ, וָ, תָ
2 M.	יָ, הָ, וָ, תָ	2 M. הָ, וָ, תָ
2 F.	יָ, הָ, וָ, תָ	2 F. הָ, וָ, תָ
1 C.	יָ, הָ, וָ, תָ	1 C. הָ, וָ, תָ

PLURAL

3 M. בַּ—, בַּ־	3 M. בַּ־	3 M. בַּ—
3 F. בַּ־, בַּ־	3 F. בַּ־	3 F. בַּ־
2 M. בַּ־	2 M. בַּ־	2 M. בַּ־
2 F. בַּ־	2 F. בַּ־	2 F. בַּ־
1 C. בַּ־	1 C. בַּ־	1 C. בַּ־

NOTE 2.—Before certain of the suffixes of the imperfect the verb stem is strengthened, being increased by בַּ־, of which בַּ־ becomes בַּ־. Assimilation then occurs between the בַּ־ and the consonant of the suffix, e. g., יקטלנו = הוּ + נ + יקטל.

EXERCISES

1. נִכְתְּבָה : נִכְתֵּב : כָּתַבְתָּ : כָּתַבְתִּי :
 תִּכְתְּבֶנָּה : אֶכְתֵּב : תִּכְתֵּב : נִכְתְּבֶם : נִכְתְּבֵי
 אֶכְתֵּב : תִּכְתְּבֶנָּה : כָּתַבְנוּ : כָּתַבְתִּי : נִכְתֵּב : נִכְתֵּב
 תִּכְתְּבֶנָּה : אֶכְתֵּב : תִּכְתֵּב : תִּכְתֵּב : תִּכְתֵּב
 תִּכְתְּבֶנָּה : אֶכְתֵּב : נִכְתֵּב : נִכְתֵּב : תִּכְתֵּב :
 כָּתַבְנוּ : תִּכְתְּבֶנָּה : תִּכְתֵּב : תִּכְתֵּב : תִּכְתֵּב :
 מִכְתֵּב : מִכְתֵּב : מִכְתֵּב : מִכְתֵּב : מִכְתֵּב :
 מִכְתֵּב : מִכְתֵּב : מִכְתֵּב : מִכְתֵּב :

2. Write out full conjugation of קָטַל, כָּתַב, using the principles outlined above.

EXERCISES

3. מִי כָתַב הַסֵּפֶר : אָמַר מֹשֶׁה : שָׁמְרוּ הַתּוֹרָה :
 וְכָתַב : אָמַר וַיְכָתֵב : וַיְכָתֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ : כָּל-הַשָּׁמַר :
 תִּכְבְּדוּ אֶת-לִבְבְּכֶם : וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַיִּצְמַח : וַיִּשְׁמַר :
 אֶת-זִרְבָּבָבָא וַיִּמְלִיכוּ : וַתִּשְׁמְרוּ אֶת-קוֹל : תִּכְתְּבוּ
 אֶת-פְּנִיָּה :

VII. Special forms of the verb.

1. The jussive form, found in 2d and 3d persons, comes by a contraction of the last syllable of the imperfect. In the regular verb this can occur only in the third stem, e. g., יִקְטִיל; jussive, יִקְטַל. In the other stems simple imperfect and jussive agree in form. The jussive may express a command, יִקְטַל, Let him kill; an entreaty, as, מֵאֵל יִקְטַל, Let him kill; in the negative a dissuasion, אַל יִקְטַל, Let him not kill. The characteristic of the jussive is rapidity of pronunciation, with tendency to recession of tone, i. e., a sharp command, urgency.

2. The cohortative, which is formed by adding the syllable הַ to the imperfect, 1st sing. or plur., expresses desire or intention and is almost exclu-

sively used in the 1st person. E. g., אֶכְתֹּב, Let me write.

3. Consecution of tenses. In stating a series of past events the first verb is put in the perfect, succeeding verbs in the imperfect with waw-consecutive: conversely in a series of future events, the imperfect (or the imperative) is followed by perfects introduced by waw-consecutive (conversive). With the perfect, waw-consecutive is written ׀, subject to the changes of ׀ conjunctive; with the imperfect, ׀ (like the article); the daghesh is often omitted with ׀, and pathach (ֿ) is lengthened to Kamets (ֿ) before א. E. g., יִכְתֹּב וְדָבַר (= , in meaning, יִכְתֹּב וְדָבַר : וְיִקְטֹל, וְיִקְטֹל).

NOTE 1.—The rule for consecution of tenses does not hold if a negative adverb or other form especially limiting the verb precede it.

VIII. The so-called irregular verbs differ from the regular conjugation in the vocalization, due to the presence of one or more of the gutturals (א, ה, ח, ע), or of yodh (י), waw (ו), or nun (נ), which letters require for their enunciation certain vocalic changes, e. g.,

Regular	Lamedh-guttural	Lamedh-aleph	Ayin-waw
קָטַלְתָּ	שָׁלַחְתָּ	מָצַאתָ	קָמַתָּ

NOTE 1.—Gutturals, e. g., do not take daghesh-forfe (i. e., are not doubled), do not take simple sh^{wa}, and for their enunciation prefer severally some vowels above the others.

NOTE 2.—The old paradigm of the grammars had the verb פָּעַל. Hence as the guttural was the first, second, or third radical, the verb was known as Pe-guttural, Ayin-guttural, Lamedh-guttural: similarly, waw (ו), yodh (י), nun (נ), aleph (א), and hē (ה).

Show wherein the following forms differ from corresponding forms of the regular verb:

אָכַל תֹּאכֹל : הִנָּחַר : נָחַטַל : הִחָזִיק : וַיַּעֲזֹב :
 הִשְׁמִיעַ : אֲשַׁמֵּעַ : נִשְׁמַד : וַיַּעֲקֹב : וַיַּגִּדֵּשׁ : נֹאכַל :
 יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם : תִּהְיֶטְאוּ :

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